

Malcolm Wallop

## STAR WARS AND THE MILITARY

Our top brass would rather fight without a shield.

A debate is in full swing inside the Reagan Administration over the development and deployment of the first components of the Strategic Defense Initiative. This dispute has already spilled over into Congress and the press, but what is most surprising goes largely unreported: namely, that the uniformed military is taking sides against the President and SDI.

President Reagan outlined his vision of a defense that would render Soviet ballistic missiles "impotent and obsolete" in March 1983. Since then the President has more or less withdrawn from the debate, intervening publicly only to defend the program's budget, but not to set clear goals. In the absence of presidential guidance, the SDI program was designed by government and military bureaucrats to emphasize exotic technologies that simply could not be turned into usable weaponry before the year 2000. Those near-term options that were available early in the Reagan Administration were cut back or cut out.

Since then several important changes have occurred. For one thing, greater technical progress than expected has been made, allowing the United States, if it chooses, to deploy strategic defenses based on technology that four years ago was unproven, and that is substantially more effective than the proposed ABM systems of the late 1970s and early 1980s. In addition, Lt. Gen. James Abrahamson, director of the Pentagon's SDI office, has focused attention on near-term systems as well as on exotic technology.

At the same time, however, the SDI program has suffered heavy budgetary cuts in Congress. Congressmen who are ideologically opposed to SDI have succeeded in framing the issue as "how much should we spend on research" rather than "should we defend the country against Soviet missiles." While

mouthed support for *some* level of research—even Rep. Ron Dellums can claim to be a supporter, having declared himself in favor of spending a scanty \$1 billion on further research—they assiduously work to cut SDI funding, slow down the program's momentum, and wait out Reagan's last term. So far this strategy has worked, and the Administration will be powerless to thwart it as long as the SDI program remains confined to pure research.

Another critical change is that the Soviet Union has made tremendous advances in strategic defense. The United States now counts nine new large, phased-array ABM battle management radars under construction in the Soviet Union, far more numerous and more powerful than those needed for early warning. At least one of these radars is in flagrant violation of the ABM treaty. A new ABM interceptor is being deployed around Moscow that is far more capable than anything the Soviets have ever fielded. A mobile ABM engagement radar, the Flat Twin,

is in production. Improvements in the Soviet air defense network—the most sophisticated in the world—particularly the deployment of the SA-10 and SA-12 interceptor missiles and radars, blur the distinction between bomber defense and missile defense. The U.S. intelligence community believes that these missiles have significant ABM capability. It is now firmly held in and outside of government that the Soviets may be preparing a nationwide ABM defense.

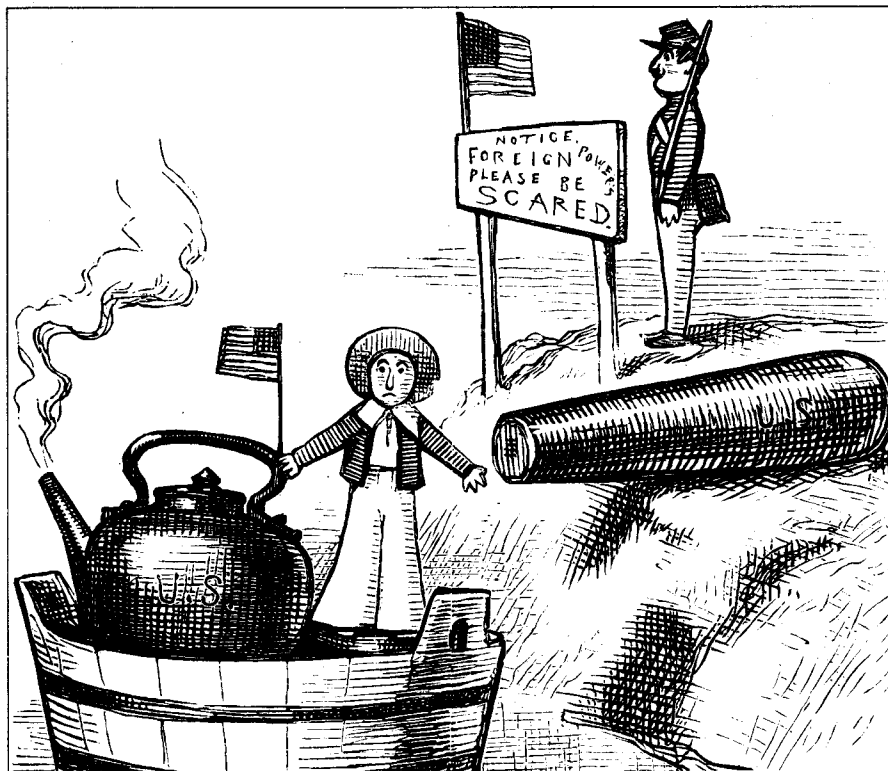
These events have conspired to change the minds of many SDI partisans inside the Administration. Secretary of Defense Weinberger, to take the most prominent example, has apparently concluded that if strategic defense is to endure beyond the Reagan presidency, it has to be set on a more positive course *now*. It is increasingly clear that the President cannot move the American people over the issue of continued SDI "research"; a more dramatic and clear-cut political line has to be drawn between those who actual-

ly support a defense of the United States and those who only mouth such support. Nothing can do this better than a development and deployment decision.

Lining up on the other side—against strategic defense—is an unholy alliance between the majority of our military leaders and the career diplomats and arms controllers. We saw this alliance before in the debate over the SALT II treaty—a military establishment convinced that the country was afraid or unwilling to compete with the Soviet Union on the strategic level; and career diplomats, who negotiated the pact, unwilling to admit that it never served America's interests. It is understandable why the diplomats despise SDI—after all, it offends the Soviet Union, which is, well, undiplomatic. It is less generally understood that the American military establishment is not at all enthusiastic about SDI.

The most recent evidence of the military's reluctance to support strategic defense was the testimony last January 21 of Admiral William Crowe, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), before the Senate Armed Services Committee. "My own view is that SDI is a research project," Crowe said. "The decision to do this [deployment] has not been made. It will be quite some time before the decision can be made." Interestingly, Secretary Weinberger had only a week earlier testified favorably about phased early deployment. Presumably, he and the chairman are working from the same facts; what separates the two men is the admiral's obvious lack of enthusiasm for SDI. And Crowe is considered one of the strongest advocates of SDI in the uniformed military!

The military establishment's opposition to strategic defense is not direct and public for the obvious reason that on March 23, 1983, SDI became much more than a group of research projects:



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it became an initiative singled out by the President. But the opposition is there. Occasionally it has emerged from under the bureaucratic cover of inter-agency struggles. When former Air Force chief of staff Charles Gabriel, for instance, was being briefed on the development of the Miniature Homing Vehicle Anti-Satellite (ASAT) weapon, a briefing he found exceptionally dull, he reportedly perked up when the briefer boasted that the ASAT could "shoot down anything the SDI could ever put up." Gabriel quipped, "That's the first good thing I've heard about it yet."

At a government-sponsored seminar, former national security adviser Robert McFarlane reportedly accused the Air Force of being "disloyal" because a group of generals went to the Congress in 1984 and lobbied against the SDI program. When current Air Force Chief of Staff General Lawrence Welch was asked about this at the same seminar, he vehemently denied the charge. He then went on to name his five top priorities as the new Air Force commander: SDI was not among them.<sup>1</sup> A member of my staff asked General Welch what priority SDI had for the Air Force. He received a curious answer: SDI is the "top priority" program for the military services, but a deployment decision is a "technical issue, not a political one." Since we are not ready to deploy anything now, according to General Welch, we do not need to raise the question of whether we should deploy or not.

The same sort of logic drives the JCS staff to delay releasing two critical reports: a statement of re-

<sup>1</sup>His top priorities were the Advanced Technology bomber (ATB), the B-1 bomber, the MX missile, the Advanced Technology fighter, and the C-17 transport plane.



quirements for strategic defense from the various military commands around the country, and a briefing on the architecture of and cost estimates for an initial SDI deployment.

Charged by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to report on overall defense requirements, the commanders-in-chief of the various military commands feed into the Pentagon a "wish list" of American and allied targets they would like to see defended. This is not an ordering of priorities, but merely a statement of need. Apparently, the commanders-in-

## Military resistance is overcome only when there is clear, persistent civilian support and supervision of change.

chief are adamant that even a marginally effective first phase defense would have significant military benefits. Further, this indicates that many of the present-day commanders hold the view that active strategic defenses are either necessary or would greatly assist them in performing their wartime missions.

The JCS staff is reportedly sitting on this requirements study for the reason that there do not exist forces today to meet those requirements—a Catch-22. The only way those forces will ever come about is if the military generates a statement of requirements for them. That is how all major weapon programs are begun.

The second study is even more politically volatile, and is essential if advocates of strategic defense within the Congress are successfully to defend the President's budget request for fiscal year 1988, which calls for an increase to \$5.8 billion from last year's funding of \$3.5 billion. This study, prepared by SDIO, outlines an initial first phase "architecture" and includes cost estimates for each phase and a timeline for development and deployment. It is stuck in the labyrinth of the JCS, being held up by a combination of service hostility to strategic defense, concern over competing budget priorities, and the intensely cautious approach always taken by the military in such matters. The SDIO study apparently concludes that a first phase architecture could begin deployment as early as 1994 (or even earlier if Department of Defense regulations are suspended) at a cost well under \$100 billion, much less than critics have argued.

Of course we are not ready to deploy a system tomorrow. We have been out of the strategic defense business for fifteen years, and important testing still needs to be done on key components of a phase-one deployment to make sure that the specific systems we select will do the job. But this does not mean

that we cannot make the *political* decision to deploy. John F. Kennedy in 1962 did not say that we would do research until the end of the decade to see if we could go to the moon. He said we would go to the moon by the end of the decade. He set a clear path for our policy-makers and scientists to follow, without specifying exactly how we would get to the moon. SDI needs a similar impetus if it is ever to provide real protection for the American people. The military establishment understands this, and by making the public

argument that a deployment decision is a technical issue, not a political one, it seeks to obfuscate the real question and thereby delay indefinitely a deployment decision.

Why is the military opposed to strategic defense? There is no question that the services have a history of resisting change. Major changes in force postures, strategy and tactics, and organization have more often than not come from the outside (as in the case of the recent JCS reorganization and the creation of a Special Forces command) or from a "Billy Mitchell" on the inside (like the role played by Admiral Rickover in the creation of the nuclear submarine force). Military resistance is overcome only when there is clear, persistent civilian support and supervision of change.

A second reason why the military is cool on strategic defense is that there is simply no constituency for it. Of course there are men in uniform, foremost among them General Abrahamson, who are ardent backers of the strategic defense mission. But Abrahamson, and especially supporters of lower rank, must be extremely careful that their advocacy not be seen by superior officers as incompatible with first order service priorities or traditions.

Strategic defense has always been a secondary mission at best for the services that have dabbled in it (the Army and Air Force). It is something to which funds, energy, and political muscle (on Capitol Hill) can be devoted only after all "first order" missions are supported. Of course they never are. The services see lean years ahead for defense and know that funds for strategic defense deployment will have to come at the expense of their more traditional interests. For the Air Force, this means lost tactical fighter wings; for the Navy, Carrier Battle groups;

and for the Army, armored and infantry divisions. The parochial JCS "triad" of forces, which controls the programming and budgeting establishment of all three services, grew out of the services' traditional roles in the Second World War. It is natural that they persist.

By contrast, the Soviets' experience created a very different strategic emphasis. Under attack from a superior air enemy (Germany) throughout most of the Second World War, they developed a keen sense of the importance that air defenses can play during battle (tactical air defense) and in providing protection for war-supporting industry (strategic air defense). The Soviets began the development of potent air defense forces during the war and continued to improve them in peacetime. The "revolution in military affairs," Soviet terminology for the advent of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles, only reinforced this emphasis on defense, albeit in untraditional forms. In 1954, the Soviets created a new, separate service for air defense (the PVO Strany) that eventually would encompass interceptor aircraft and surface-to-air missiles to defend against enemy bombers, anti-ballistic missiles to defend against strategic missile attack, and anti-satellite forces to attack enemy space-borne forces and seize control of space in a conflict. All of these missions and supporting forces exist today and have undergone constant modernization. The Soviet Air Defense forces have over 700,000 personnel and are considered the third most important service behind the Red Army and Strategic Rocket Forces. There is no counterpart to this service, or effort, in the United States.

Without a constituency in the U.S. armed forces, strategic defense can never be anything but a stepchild in the competition for service support and funding. Since the 1972 signing of the ABM treaty, only the Army has shown any enthusiasm for strategic defense (mostly to hold onto the one strategic mission area they possess); but still there is no question that if funds are short and "regular" Army programs are not fully funded, strategic defense will be neglected. The same holds true for the other services. Today, no single command of any branch of the U.S. armed forces has the mission to defend the United States from Soviet nuclear attack.<sup>2</sup>

A final reason for military opposition to strategic defense is obvious: A strong advocacy of it threatens many service careers. This is particularly true of that part of the Air Force and Navy that has grown up in an offense-dominated world. The Strategic Air Command (SAC), the Joint Strategic Targeting Planning Staff (JSTPS), and



the Navy have been telling us for years that their bombers and missiles will always get through. A strategic defense of the United States would at the very least require an uncomfortable reassessment of this assumption, in which Soviet strategic defenses are conveniently ignored or underrated.

To make matters worse, many of today's senior brass in the Pentagon began their careers during the McNamara years, when Mutual Assured Destruction, crisis management, and arms control first came into vogue, and they haven't changed their thinking. Although Republicans dismantled the civilian organization of McNamara's Pentagon when they came into office in 1981, they did little to change the policy mindset. Indeed, they handed control of the Pentagon back to the military. The problem is that they did not give it back to the sort of military establishment that existed before 1961, which had some notion of strategy and understood that its role as warrior was at least as important as that of military bureaucrat.

Needless to say, without the support of the military establishment, it is unlikely that SDI will progress beyond its current state of indefinite research and programmatic wheel-spinning. Given the way Congress appropriates funds, and the faddishness that research programs are always subject to, SDI will be living on the edge of extinction for the next few years. It will probably not live out the decade unless changes in the program are made, and soon.

Some positive steps have already been taken. The President laid down a clear marker in the State of the Union

<sup>1</sup>The mission of the United States Army Strategic Defense Command is to "conduct a coordinated research program . . . which ensures a timely, energetic, cost effective development of mature and revolutionary technologies for defense against ballistic missiles." The North American Aerospace Defense Command, or NORAD, classifies its mission areas in the following order of priority: (1) warning of missile and bomber attack, (2) tracking and cataloguing earth-orbiting satellites, and (3) "maintaining the *peacetime* sovereignty of United States and Canadian airspace, and providing *limited* defense against an air attack" (my emphasis). The mission of the U.S. Space Command, a product of the JCS system which ensures that all the services get to play or none of them does, is the most artful piece of bureaucratic obfuscation I have seen, and is worth quoting in full if only for the reader's amusement: "The Space Command mission is to manage and operate assigned space assets, to centralize planning, to consolidate requirements, to provide operational advocacy, and to ensure a close interface between research and development activities and operational users of Air Force space programs."

Address that he will not let the Soviets cripple SDI through arms control, nor will he stand for unilateral constraints imposed on his Administration by Congress. Advocates of strategic defense must remain vigilant to ensure that this clear presidential intention is not subverted. Some inside the Administration are thinking more clearly about SDI, both politically and strategically, and the rhetoric that has emerged thus far, however muted, has already had a strong impact. In a speech before the National Space Foundation on January 22, Secretary Weinberger spoke lucidly about the strategic advantages of phased deployment and advocated an SDI program that would lead "to a decision on deployment as soon as feasible."<sup>3</sup> One need only listen to the cries of the arms controllers that the ABM treaty is in jeopardy to understand that the Administration is on the right track.

The Administration must go beyond rhetoric, though, if it is to capture a consensus in Congress. This means sending to Congress at the earliest possible date a blueprint for initial, phased deployment. Like any blueprint, it must be open to modification, but it must be specific enough to inform Congress of the real benefits to our security that can be achieved through strategic defense.

For the long term, a constituency for strategic defense must be established within the armed forces. If not, strategic defense will always be subject to slow funding strangulation by the Pentagon or outright decapitation by the arms controllers. Whether this means we should create a new military service, as the Soviets did, is unclear. Such a step would be painful, although the United States did create a new service, the Air Force, forty years ago when it appeared wise to do so. A dedicated service may be the only sure way to implant strategic defense into our overall strategic policy.

Finally, our military leaders must come to realize that their opposition to strategic defense does not serve either their interests, unless very narrowly defined, or the nation's. American statesmen need a straightforward military assessment of our strategic predicament, not one filtered through the political lens of parochial service interests. □

<sup>3</sup>Unfortunately, Mr. Weinberger has recently stated elsewhere that we have "nothing on the shelf" with which to begin SDI deployment. The only explanation for this inconsistency is that Mr. Weinberger, in his obvious enthusiasm for SDI, got out in front of the service chiefs and the Pentagon bureaucrats. Instead of providing the technical information to back up his earlier statements, they left him unaided, forcing him to make a tactical retreat.



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# EMINENTOES



## RUSSELL BAKER'S GENTLE REIGN

by Howard Kaplan

This summer at the *New York Times*, July 16 to be exact, Russell Baker's famous column turns an ancient twenty-five. Now I hate to spoil the party in any major kind of way, but never once in all these years has the "Observer" been criticized; a pinprick here and there perhaps, but nothing more sustained. Writers supposedly get pummeled just for being prolific, and if that's the case then Baker is long overdue. Three weekly performances every year for a quarter-century rounds off to 2.9 million words on the calculator or almost triple the mileage of *Remembrance of Things Past*. (One of Baker's favorite wheezes has him trudging through Proust.) That's enough for twenty volumes, a whole shelf of the "Observer," and still the man has never provoked anything but . . . esteem.

This, ultimately, is the problem with Baker. He is too nice a guy, too bland in his bones. And it isn't just the utter lack of enemies that tips you off. It's also the two Pulitzer Prizes and the massive syndication, it's the good burghers who rush to blurb the latest Baker book. Mostly, though, it's the approbation of *Time* magazine. If Baker died tomorrow and *Time* ruled the world, his remains would be safe-deposited among the immortals. "To call him a humorist does not contain him," *Time* eulogized in February. "When the story of our times is finally written, historians may find it best defined not by conventional Washington experts but by Baker's down-home wisdom."

Russell Baker is not the first light essayist who ever lived. He conforms to a type. And that type has been criticized. Incredible but true. Not just criticized but tagged and bagged. From Cyril Connolly's *Enemies of Promise* (1938):

He made prose artful, and whimsical, he made it sonorous when sonority was not

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needed, affected when it did not require affectation. . . . He emphasized his gentle irony, his gentle melancholy, his gentle inanity.

In short, he wrote

playfully and apologetically about nothing.

The writer in question is the English essayist Joseph Addison (1672-1719). But substitute Baker's name for "he" and change the verbs to present tense, and the above lines read like an indictment of the "Observer." The gentle irony, the gentle melancholy, the gentle inanity. Exactly! It's as if Baker were Addison come back to life.

A little extracurricular reading only points up the resemblance. At times it's uncanny. Of course Baker himself conceivably had Addison in mind when in 1962 he dubbed his new column the "Observer": Addison's fame largely derives from his periodical, *The Spectator*, the first of its kind devoted exclusively to the light essay. But is Baker aware of the other overlaps? Addison first hit his stride as a professional "col-

umnist" in his friend Richard Steele's earlier journal, *The Tatler*. William Thackeray tells the story in his book of lectures, *The English Humorists*: "Addison, then in Ireland, caught at his friend's notion, poured in paper after paper, and contributed the stores of his mind, the sweet fruits of his reading, the delightful gleanings of his daily observations." He was, Thackeray adds, "six-and-thirty years old" . . . Baker's same exact age at the birth of his own column. Now we can let it go at that, a nice coincidence and so on, but it may explain why the two seem so alike. Thirty-six marks the first of many slow-ups on life's highway. The age itself seems to have locked them into . . . irony, melancholy, and inanity, all "gentle."

Or look at the ideal reader for each. Mr. Spectator comes right out and says, There are none to whom this paper of mine will be more useful "than to the Female World," by which phrase he specifically means London ladies, the women of *bon ton* . . . in spirit the same exact audience favored by Baker.

As he once told an interviewer: "The image I carry in my head of my reader is of a sophisticated, well-educated woman who lives on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. . . . Maybe she's been to Smith, maybe she's slightly liberal."

Which again is perfect too, this business of "slightly liberal." Just as it reflects his own bias so it melds with that of Addison, who worked intermittently for the liberal-spirited Whigs. And even if for certain Baker-ites the columns "don't seem very political," Addison's too by his own admission tried to mute the rumble of partisanship: "I never espoused any Party with Violence, and am resolved to observe an exact Neutrality."

We could do this forever. Even the respective testimonials practically match up word for word. "A great writer and moralist"—that's Thackeray on Addison. "Not a humorist but a moralist"—John Chancellor on Baker. And whether you're anthologizing *The Spectator* or puffing Baker for the millionth time, you must slip in, always, the words "follies" and "foibles," or better—"follies of the day," which each man in his own way is "gently ridiculing."

This is all beginning to sound like a glorious compliment to Baker. Addison is a seminal figure, and here is Baker his apparent avatar. But Addison has been attacked and not by Connolly alone. If this comparison works at all it's only to get at Baker's defects through those of an established name in EngLit. Baker in any case is not the first to follow Addison, or the "Addison-Steele tradition." Rather, he's a dot on a line thick with dots like himself—"the professional humorists, the delicious middlemen, the fourth leaders" (Cyril Connolly).

One of the earlier, larger dots is the Romantic essayist William Hazlitt (who didn't discover his vocation until . . . age thirty-six). Like Connolly a century later, Hazlitt was bored by Addison's *Spectator*. He was much more

